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**Joel Bruckenstein**

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Q&A: Joel Bruckenstein on What to Expect at T3**

**The advisor technology conference co-founder on what he expects to see at next week's gathering in Tampa—no surprise, artificial intelligence and machine learning will be heavily featured, especially in the Emerging Technologies sessions.**

Rob Burgess | Mar 10, 2023

On Monday, the four-day Technology Tools for Today (T3) conference kicks off in Tampa, Fla. Before this year's sessions begin, though, co-creator Joel Bruckenstein took the time to discuss what's ahead for this year's meeting.

WealthManagement.com: What are you excited about this year?

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Joel Bruckenstein: Well, one thing we found from last year's T3 Inside Information Tech Survey is that advisors are struggling with digital marketing. So, our first keynote on Monday is a digital marketing session with Stacy Havener (founder and CEO of Havener Capital Partners) and Samantha Russell (chief evangelist at FMG Suite), which is going to be amazing.

There's going to be a big focus on cybersecurity this year. Because that's another thing that our surveys over the last few years have told us that advisors are not doing enough of that, but we're going to make it very approachable to advisors. It's not going to be technical. It's going to be kind of 'here's what you've got to do.'

I was at the Orion Ascent Conference last week. I'm really looking forward to their general session because I'm simply amazed at some of the things they've been able to do over the last year.

Pietro La Greca Jr. is speaking in the afternoon on Monday. He actually used to work in this industry. He was an institutional sales guy for what at that time was the leading portfolio management software in North America. He's got a bestselling book that's on Amazon that's being made into a miniseries. He's going to be a keynote. That's just going to be from somebody who was in the industry and who has an amazing story to tell, which is all true, it's not fiction, which makes it even better.

We're wrapping up Monday with the release of the new T3 Inside Information Technology Report, which always is interesting.

As you can imagine, there's a lot of interest in the TD Ameritrade conversion to Schwab. So, we have two top-level execs from Schwab. I'm going to be doing a fireside chat with them on Tuesday. Tom Bradley (managing director of Charles Schwab Advisor Services) and Jalina Kerr (managing director of client experience at Charles Schwab Advisor Services) about how that's going. What to expect. And everything else that's going on with Schwab that's interesting.

Other highlights on Tuesday, Marco Di Maggio (professor and researcher at Harvard Business School) is an internationally renowned expert on all things blockchain and bitcoin and he's going to be speaking Tuesday afternoon.

Dan Moisand, who is the chair of the CFP Board, is going to be speaking.

We've got Craig Iskowitz (founder of the Ezra Group) doing a really interesting session on broker/dealer platforms on the enterprise side.

Wrapping up Tuesday, two really good sessions, one on inclusion, which is sponsored by the Carson Group. The other one is "The Entrepreneur's Recipe," which is Brian Hamburger (president and CEO of MarketCounsel) and Shirl Penney (president and CEO of Dynasty Financial Partners).

And Wednesday, even more good stuff. Some of the highlights on Wednesday are just going to be some of the keynotes.

Goldman Sachs is getting into the business. They're going to be talking.

Addepar's got a general session.

There's a relatively new company called Nebo, but it's a technology that was developed by GMO, Jeremy Grantham's firm. I don't think most people have ever heard of it or have seen it. (Editor's note: Except for those who pay attention to the Wealthmanagement.com Industry Awards. Nebo won the 2022 award in the highly competitive Industry Disruptor category.)

And then also on Wednesday, there's a really good session from Supernova about securities-based lending. It's a great opportunity for advisors that most advisors know very little about.

And then Mark Hurley (CEO of Digital Privacy & Protection). He's been a very controversial figure in our market over the years, releasing white papers that create a lot of controversy. He's releasing a new white paper on Wednesday afternoon that will create a lot of controversy.

And we'll wrap up Wednesday afternoon with a special session that I'm doing with the Oasis Group, about advisors owning their data, managing their data, data warehousing, data lakes. How to leverage that, etc.

And Wednesday night we have the annual big T3 fintech party that's sponsored by TradePMR and Orion at the Southern Belle, which is a country-and-western bar and grill. And we're going to party.

And then, Thursday we have a half a day, which is essentially continuing education sessions. So, for those people who need to rack up some CE credits, Thursday morning is the time to do it.

WM: Yes, I was going to ask you about the Mark Hurley presentation. The way he was described to me was that he 'likes to stir the pot.'

JB: He's going to be stirring the pot. Guaranteed. During his session, we're going to be releasing his white paper. So that'll come out Wednesday. I'm sworn to secrecy, so I can't tell you much about it. I can just guarantee it's going to be somewhat controversial because everything he does is controversial.

WM: I've been writing about AI recently, so I was interested in the 'HIFON Talks Tech: AI Comes to the RIA' session on Monday.

JB: HIFON is an organization of, for lack of a better term, people who are senior back-office people. So, they are the people behind the scenes who are operating a lot of the technology. Think of it as the chief operations officer, those kinds of people. So, they tend to be very interested in AI and how it can make their lives easier.

I can tell you there will be a lot of AI discussion at T3. There are a number of exhibitors who will be there for the first time and a number of them are leveraging AI in interesting ways. FP Alpha is going to have a general session. Their software is powered by machine learning and to some extent AI, and there are at least three or four other companies that are leveraging AI in interesting ways in the conference.

We probably have the most new, interesting companies in the exhibit hall in about a decade. The last time we had this many ones that really interested me was when the robos first came out. So, a lot of new, interesting and very well-funded startups, which I think is a differentiator from the past.

Typically, five, six, seven years ago a lot of these things were VC money or on a shoestring. And these are well-funded companies run by in many cases mature operators who have a track record. So I think there's some really cool new technology. And we make it easy for you to find all of the new stuff because we put it all in one corner of the exhibit hall. It's called the Emerging Technology section. So, everybody comes to me every year and says, "What's new and interesting?" So, for the last few years, I've been able to say, "Just got to the Emerging Tech section, that's where pretty much all the new, cool stuff is from emerging tech companies." It's not to say the mature companies don't have cool and interesting stuff as well. But, we want to find the latest companies that are doing interesting things; it's in the Emerging Tech section.

WM: How many advisors have signed up so far?

JB: I don't know exactly; it's probably in the range of 300 to 400. There's people signing up as we speak. We usually get about 40% to 50% of our attendees are advisors. Our show is unique in the industry. It's not just about advisors. It's about industry consultants who are coming to learn, to share their knowledge with advisors. It's about people doing deals in the exhibit hall. A lot of M&A activity happens and just a lot of integration work goes on between the vendors there. So, we are not strictly speaking, and the press always gets this wrong, an advisor conference. The conference is definitely there to benefit advisors, but there's just as much benefit to the vendors who come because they're interacting with each other. There are a lot of consultants who come to learn the latest and greatest and a lot of journalists to find out what's going on. We have a very eclectic mix.

WM: I was also interested in the ChatGPT session on Tuesday.

JB: I just wrote an article on my blog the other day using ChatGPT just for fun. And quite frankly they're not the only interesting AI out there that has applicability to advisors. I suspect you'll hear at the various sessions at least

two or three other AI names dropped that I think have applicability to advisors.

I think most of them can't even figure out how to integrate ChatGPT into Word quite frankly even though it's not very difficult. But, my feeling is, being somebody who has been doing this for 25 years, most advisors are going to get it when their vendors build it into existing systems as opposed to advisors going out and using ChatGPT.

People who I consider some of the best programmers in the industry, there are two people I know really well who I respect very much, and both of them are already using OpenAI to write code. And it does it faster and better than they can do it themselves. And again, it has some limitations. ... But people who use those products, even though they don't realize it are already benefiting from it because people are now able to improve their code and write new code and new features faster, cheaper and better than ever before. So, that's just like one example.

There's a number of firms that have it built into their systems and I think of particular interest because most advisors who come to my conference are tech-forward and are always looking to grow their business because if not, they probably wouldn't come.

There are two and maybe three digital marketing firms that are also using machine learning and AI with lead gen for advisors to help them find the kind of leads that they are looking for. And that wasn't happening two years ago.

WM: Is there anything else you want attendees to know?

JB: I mean there's so much interesting stuff that's happening in the exhibit hall. Unfortunately, about 50% of the advisors who come don't really spend enough time in the exhibit hall checking out everything, but there's a minority of advisors who over the years have come and literally never gone to a session and they've spent the whole time in the exhibit hall just checking out products. So, whichever end of the spectrum you're on, it's all there for you. You've just got to put in the hours. It's long days at T3. Because at 7 a.m. we open the exhibit hall and we run until at least 6 p.m. each day and there's usually extracurricular activities afterward and after that networking in the bar until the wee hours. So, I don't get a lot of sleep at T3. If I get four or five hours on a typical night, it's a lot.